FAMOUS LOVES OF FAMOUS AMERICANS

Aaron Burr.

The Courtship, Marriage and Estrangement of Aaron Burr and Mme. Jumel—One the Friend of Kings and Great Men and the Most Talked Of Woman of Her Age, the Other Scholar and Master Politician, Who Was Loved by a Hundred Women and Never Loved But One

By ROBERT STEPHENS.

OUT of the grounds of the finest mansion in New York, that fronted on the Harlem, a carriage rolled one fine day in the spring of 1833. In it was seated a woman of 58 who looked less than 40. She had been the friend of kings and great men generally and one of the most talked of women of her age. She was a blonde, tall and statuesque and with rare charm of manner.

Into the great road that is now the upper part of Broadway the carriage turned and then went speeding past farms and fields, over hills and dales. The woman rode without displaying much interest. It was nearly half an hour before she entered the city proper. There was little of New York in that day that extended as far north as Twenty-third street and most of the city was south of Canal street.

Mile after mile the carriage rolled on until it reached Cedar street. Then the horses turned to the east and stopped at the corner of Nassau street, where the handsome woman alighted and went up the steps of 23 Nassau street. On the second floor she was ushered into the office of Aaron Burr, lawyer, former Vice-President of the United States, former exile, man of wonderful ability and man of many sorrows.

The woman was Mme. Jumel. She had some real estate matters she wanted advice about, so she visited Burr. Perhaps, womanlike, she desired to see again the man who had broken the hearts of many women.

No one could be more courteous than was Burr to his beautiful visitor. He complimented her on her fine appearance, chatted with her as only he could chat and then, turning to business, listened to her statement, took her papers, assured her that all her affairs would be attended to in good style and then, when she arose, he arose too, conducted her down the stairs and handed her into her carriage with the air and grace of a prince.

A queer couple were Aaron Burr and Elizabeth Jumel. No man in America came of a better family than Aaron Burr. His grandfather was one of the pillars of Yale and the founder of Princeton. America has produced few scholars the equal of Burr, and few who made more of a mess of their lives.

He was one of the master politicians of his day. The greatest mistake he ever made was in killing Hamilton. His dream of empire in the Southwest came to fruition less than half a century after his memorable trip down the Ohio and the Mississippi that led to his arrest and trial for treason.

He was Vice-President of the United States when he killed Hamilton. A few years later he was a penniless exile in Europe. He was a lawyer of fine ability, but he never had the money making art. Although undersized, being less then five feet four inches in height and rather slender, he commanded attention wherever he went. His eyes were remarkable. They were very dark, brilliant and piercing. His greatest gift was his speech. Few persons could withstand his eloquence.

And Elizabeth Jumel—who knows about her? All sorts of stories have been told about that beautiful woman. There is one tale to the effect that she was the natural daughter of a French naval commander named Capet; that she was born at sea on a French frigate and was reared by Mrs. Thompson of Newport, R. I. There is another that she was born in the Providence, R. I., poorhouse and that she was adopted by a Mr. Bowen, whose name she bore. There is still another story that when she was 17 she eloped to New York with Col. Peter Croix, a British officer, and that she lived with him in a fine wooden house at Thirty-fourth street and Fifth avenue, where later A. T. Stewart had his marble mansion and where now the Knickerbocker Trust has its classic structure.

There may be a grain of truth in each of these stories. At any rate the record in St. Peter's Church in Barclay street, New York, which she gave when she was married April 17, 1804, sets down the fact that she was born April 2, 1777, that she was the daughter of John and Phebe Bowen, that her father was a sea captain and that he was drowned at sea.

What does it matter if she did live in a frame house at Thirty-fourth street and Fifth avenue? Perhaps it was here that Stephen Jumel met and wooed her.

A queer old boy was Stephen Jumel. He had been a coffee planter in Santo Domingo. In the troubles between the blacks and the whites there when Toulssant l'Overture created a negro republic and became a black Napoleon, Jumel fled for his life. He got on a passing vessel and sailed across the seas far to the east. A strange thing it is that he was landed at St. Helena, the isle that was to be the home of a man who later was to be one of his greatest friends.

He was lucky enough to have a ship put in at St. Helena on which he got passage to New York, and when he reached America penniless he had the greater good fortune of discovering that a cargo of coffee he had shipped months before for Europe had been landed in New York because of an accident to the vessel and was here awaiting his orders. The proceeds of the sale of that cargo gave ample capital for him to engage in business and in a few years he was a wealthy merchant.

Then he married Elizabeth Bowen. He was fifty. She was 27. Jumel simply adored his beautiful wife. In 1810 he purchased for her the Morris mansion, which now is known as the Jumel mansion. There he lived in a splendor that occasioned wonder.

Every celebrity who came to America was entertained by him. Every great American who visited New York felt that his trip was not complete unless he enjoyed the hospitality of M. and Mme. Jumel.

Year by year Jumel's fortune grew. Year by year he lavished more money on Madame. Jumel was an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon. When Bonaparte began to meet with misfortune Jumel sailed across the sea in his own ship, the Elizabeth, and offered an asylum to Napoleon in New York if it ever should be necessary for him to leave France. Napoleon thanked him and said:

"It would not be fitting for me to seek asylum across the seas no matter how ill my fortune might be."

Jumel bought one of the most magnificent establishments in Paris and there he and Madame lived from 1813 to 1828. That was one of the most brilliant and one of the most kaleidoscopic periods of French society. Then late in 1828, Jumel, finding his fortune somewhat impaired, sold his Paris establishment and returned to New York. He again took up business and the couple resumed in part their former magnificence of living.

Their mansion, up near the northern end of Manhattan Island, was a treasure house. Among its furnishings were eight chairs which Napoleon used in the time of the First Consulate. There was a table the marble top of which had been given to Madame by the Khedive of Egypt. There was a clock, a present from Napoleon. The clock had been the one he had used in the Tuileries.

There was a chandelier given to her by Gen. Moreau, rival of Napoleon. There were tapestries and prints collected by the Empress Josephine. All of the dining room furniture had been owned by Charles X. The greatest of all her treasures were an army chest and an army bed. These were the ones Napoleon had used in his Italian campaign, the most glorious period of his military career.

When Joseph Napoleon visited the Jumels in the Jumel mansion he was received in imperial style and all deference shown to him that would have been shown were he still a monarch. There too went Louis Napoleon, he who later became Emperor of the French under the title of Napoleon III. There too went Jerome Bonaparte. There was carried Stephen Jumel one day in 1832, and when they carried him out it was to take him to his grave. He had been thrown from a carriage and fatally injured.

Between the time of M. Jumel's death and the visit of Madame to the office of Aaron Burr the gossips had been busy with the name of the beautiful widow. They had been busy with her name long before that. She always had been gossiped about, it seems. It didn't seem to bother her. She was one of the richest women of the day.

Back from 23 Nassau street she rode to Broadway and up Broadway the long, long journey to the Jumel mansion. Maybe she thought a good deal as she rode along of the man she had been talking with in the office downtown.

She had known him and she had known Hamilton many years before. The two men had been rivals for her smiles thirty-odd years before, as they had been rivals in everything from the day they met as Sons of Liberty and raised the flag of independence near Trinity Church long before Bunker Hill. They had been rivals as military secretary to George Washington, and they had been rivals in the great game of politics.

She couldn't forget the eyes of Burr nor could she forget his speech. He was a great old boy with the ladies. He was 77—rather old for a Romeo—and yet he stirred her heart. Within a week after that meeting at 23 Nassau street Mme. Jumel gave a great banquet at her mansion by the Harlem. Burr was the guest of honor.

He never was more brilliant than that night. Never did he display with greater effect the mastery he held over the minds of men and women when he sought to exert himself. It was late when the party left. Burr, frail, white and withered, but still a beau, said as he was parting:

"Madame, I give you my hand. My heart has long been yours."

After that Burr drove up the long road of Broadway many, many times. One day while he and Madame were walking under the cedars that had come from Mount Lebanon he proposed marriage. She refused, but she hesitated in refusing.

That didn't bother her aged admirer. He continued his courting, and then one day, as though in jest, he told her that one of these fine days that were so plentiful just then he would come to the Jumel mansion with a clergyman and that there would be no use for her to say "nay."

The next time Burr went up the long, long road the Rev. Dr. David Bogart rode by his side. This was the same clergyman who many years before had married Burr to Theodosia Provost, mother of that Theodosia who was lost at sea and for sight of whom Burr went a thousand times to the Battery and looked out over the sea that was her grave.

Mme. Jumel may have been timid, or it may have been affectation, but when she saw Burr and Dr. Bogart she demurred. Strange how many objections she was able to raise. She didn't have anything to wear. What would the people say? Really, she never had any idea of marriage. She was too old. She would have to think the matter over.

Burr took her hand. Nelson Chase, who was married to her niece, argued with her. Burr pleaded and Chase added to what he said. Finally she said she would decide in five minutes. She went to her room. Mrs. Chase went with her. It was twenty minutes before Madame returned.

There was no doubt about her decision as soon as she appeared. She had on her finest satin gown and all her jewels. This gown was so heavy and stiff it would stand alone. She came down the grand staircase, walked forward to the Colonel, put her hand in his, and then, the two taking their position in front of the great fireplace, they were married. It was on July 1, 1833.

To Burr this marriage seemed like the opening of a new life. It didn't matter what people said. For the first time in his life he was rich. He had great ambitions, great hopes, despite his advanced age. First, he must make a grand tour with his beautiful wife. He would visit the principal cities of America and then go abroad.

A few days after the marriage they went to Connecticut to visit Burr's nephew, who was Governor of the State. While the honeymooners were there Mme. Jumel sold some shares she owned in the bridge over the Connecticut River at Hartford. Burr, as her husband and a man of business, collected the money and deposited it to his own credit in New York.

Ten days after the marriage the Colonel and his bride were in New York. She asked about the money. He told her she was married to a man and the man would take care of her business matters. Mme. Jumel had a temper of her own. She made some unkind remarks. The Colonel suggested that she go to her room. She made some retort that cut Burr to the quick. He left the Jumel mansion and slept that night in the modest room in Duane street he formerly had occupied.

The love dream of the aged Romeo and Juliet was over. There was a reconciliation a week or two later, but not for long. Burr was imperious. Mme. Jumel had been an old man's darling while the wife of Jumel. She couldn't tolerate the attitude of her new husband. Her patience was exhausted by his insistence that she was his wife and that that was enough dignity for any woman.

Estrangement came again. Madame, in her anger, took legal action to deprive Burr of control of her property. He was furious. He never forgave her for that slight upon his honor. He put in a defence, but withdrew it.

Her conduct in this matter preyed upon his mind. He became very ill and was thought to be dying. Madame went to the lodging house in which he was living. He was delirious. She had him bundled up, put in a carriage and taken to her mansion, where she nursed him for several weeks.

When he recovered consciousness he refused to hold speech with her. So soon as he was able to stand he left the house, never to return. He had been born in Staten Island in 1756. Late in September, 1836, eighty years and seven months after he came on earth, he crossed the waters of the bay and went to an old tavern not far from where he was born. There he died with no one to attend him.

A hundred women had loved him and he never had loved but one.

Mme. Jumel took the death of Burr almost with relief. Within a few months she was the same enchanting adventuress and capricious woman as of yore. Once more she was supremely indifferent to criticism. She was prodigal in her gifts, magnificent in her entertainments. The following June she was the leading spirit in a carnival of flowers such as New York had never seen before. She spent a lot of money on the beautification of the grounds about the Jumel mansion. She had no desire to be known as Mrs. Burr.

In 1852 she made another visit to Paris. Louis Napoleon was at the height of his glory. He gave a grand ball in her honor. She was taken into the ballroom on the arm of Jerome Bonaparte. A thousand courtesies were shown to her during her visit. Louis Napoleon could not do too much for the woman who had befriended him when he was a penniless adventurer in the streets of New York.

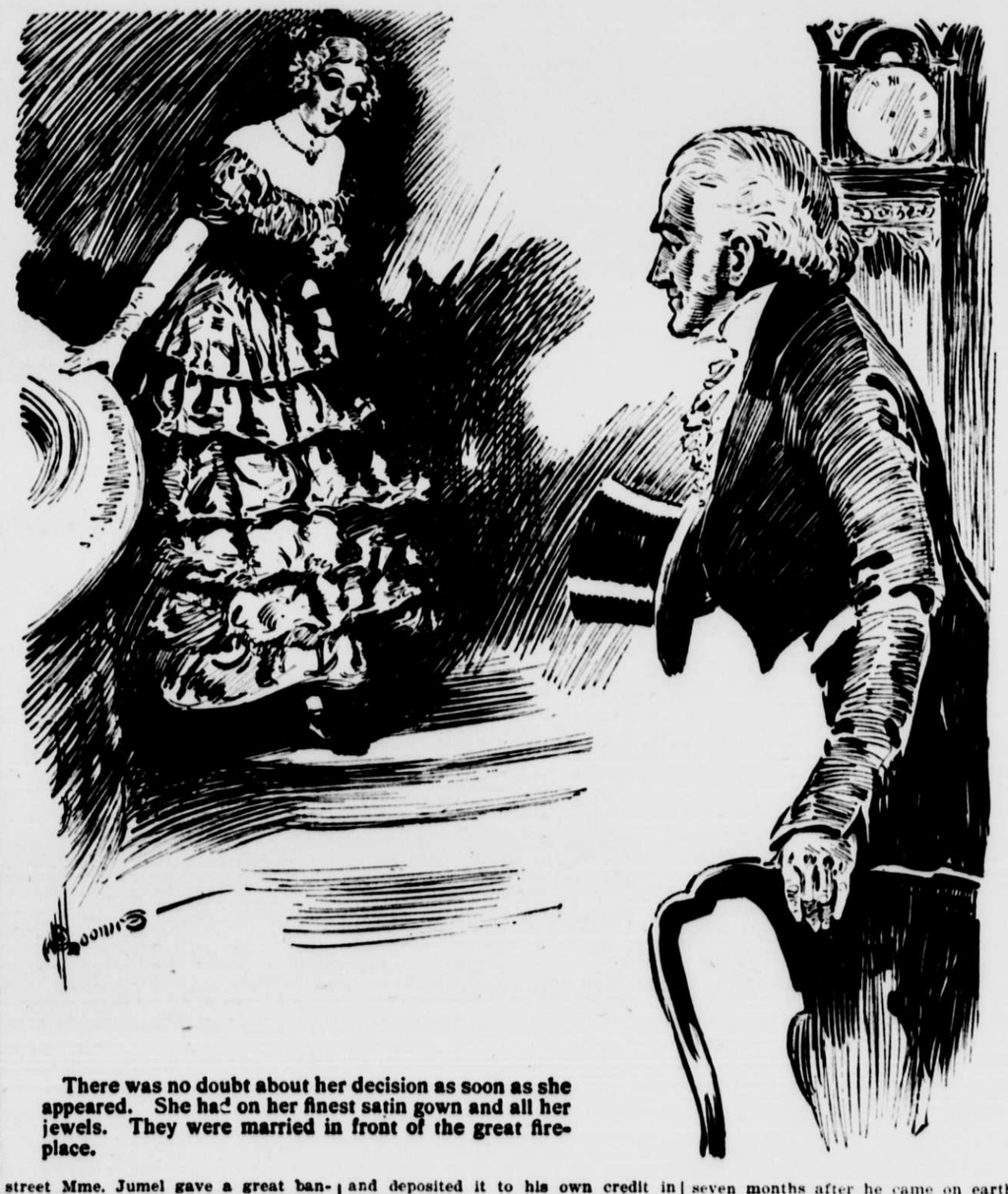
The honors showered upon her by Louis Napoleon made Mme. Jumel think she almost was royal herself. It turned her head. When she reopened the Jumel mansion she had her own private troops to attend her. She had a bodyguard of twenty soldiers. Visitors were announced as if they were coming into the presence of royalty. Each summer she went to Saratoga, her train of attendants numbering fifty or more persons.

Her mind was weakening. The older she became the more she thought of Burr and the more she talked of him. In the last few years of her life she never mentioned the name Jumel. She died in her mansion July 16, 1865, in her eighty-ninth year. Twenty of the most distinguished citizens of New York acted as pallbearers.

She left more than $1,000,000, but more than her money she left her name and some romances never to be forgotten.

Next week the love story of Andrew Jackson and Rachel Donelson.

Mme. Jumel a short time after Aaron Burr's death



There was no doubt about her decision as soon as she appeared. She had on her finest satin gown and all her jewels. They were married in front of the great fireplace.

Jersey's Blue Laws May Be Repealed

NEW JERSEY'S blue laws, which prohibit almost everything on Sunday but churchgoing, eating and killing mosquitoes, may be repealed soon. A bill for that purpose is now before the State Legislature.

Along with the blue laws may go a mossgrown old statute labelled "witchcraft," which was enacted when Jersey people still believed in sorcery. It has been carried down by all the revisers of the code to the present day. Another antiquated law forbidding lawyers to offer as evidence in a New Jersey court any decision or ruling of an English tribunal, which was adopted in 1801, is destined to follow the same course. The penalty for violating it is a year's disbarment. But it has not been enforced in the last ninety years, so far as the records show.

Christian P. Christensen, who after his retirement from the ministry some years ago founded the Psychological Research Society in Manhattan and is now its president and head researcher, is really responsible for the proposed repeal of the witchcraft law. Recently he went over to Hoboken to conduct a spiritualist meeting at Odd Fellows Hall. And because he insisted on summoning a troupe of spooks to the meeting he was arrested and charged with practising sorcery. Police Recorder Joseph J. McGovern, who by the way is a great friend of President Wilson, fined him $50 and costs. He might have made it $1,000 fine or three years in prison or both.

Christensen was angry. He said he was neither a witch nor a pretender of witchcraft but one of the leaders of a religious sect. He said if he believed in spooks it was his business. He said the law should be stricken from the statutes.

Thomas F. A. Griffin, a Jersey City lawyer and member of the Assembly, as soon as he learned of the Christensen affair decided that the credit for a repealer should go to him. The bill wiping the statute off the books will be introduced shortly.

On May 26, 1668, the General Assembly of East Jersey passed a law which said: "If any person be found to be a witch, either male or female, they shall be put to death." East Jersey at that time was under the control of the Carterets. There were also many Quakers in the province and burning at the stake was deemed to be none too good for spooky folks.

On March 18, 1796, the New Jersey Assembly decided to let the offence of witchcraft down easy and made it an offence punishable by a $50 fine or three months in jail or both. That act, which is almost identical with the one still in force, sets forth that "any person who shall pretend to exercise or use any kind of conjuration, witchcraft, sorcery or enchantment or pretend from his skill or knowledge in any occult or crafty science to discover wherein or in what manner any goods or chattels, supposed to have been stolen or lost, may be found shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."

This law found its way into the criminal code adopted in 1898. But under that revision to practise witchcraft was made a more serious offence than it had been for a hundred years and the penalty was made three years and $1,000 fine or both. The law itself has remained intact since 1796. Not more than three words in the entire section have been changed in all the revisions that have been made.

If Assemblyman Joseph B. Bloom of Essex county succeeds in getting his blue law repealer through you will be able to do many things for which a penalty of $1 for each offence is now provided. The law says:

"No travelling, worldly employment or business, ordinary or servile labor or work, either upon land or water (works of necessity and charity excepted), nor shooting, fishing (not including fishing with a seine or net), hunting, gunning and racing, or frequenting of tippling houses, nor any interludes or plays, dancing, singing, fiddling or other music for the sake of merriment, nor any playing of football, fives, ninepins, bowls, long bullets or quoits, nor any other kind of playing, sports, pastimes or diversions shall be done, performed, used or practised by any person on the Christian Sabbath."

In reenacting the same law March 16, 1898, when folks played golf and baseball and went carriage riding and walking on Sunday—and the law revisers knew such things were being done—the New Jersey Legislature also decreed that any merchant who should open his store on Sunday or expose any of his wares for sale or any hawkers or pedlers who should attempt to do business should be fined $2 for each and every offence.

This law does not prohibit driving or walking to or from church, provided the distance is twenty miles or under, or going to call a physician or carrying the mail to or from the post office. Neither does it prohibit the frying of victuals in "lodging houses, inns and other houses of entertainment for the use of sojourners, travellers or strangers."

It was on March 22, 1682, that the blue laws were first enacted by the East Jersey Assembly. The fine in those days was five shillings for the first offence and ten shillings for the second and every offence thereafter.

But these are not all the things that can happen to Jersey folks. On October 1, 1787, the Assembly passed a law making it a penal offence punishable by a twenty shilling fine to drive a wagon with a gauge of less than four feet and ten inches over a public highway. The gauge means from centre of wheel rim to centre of wheel rim. This law, ridiculous as it may appear to those who run a touring car, was passed in the days of the one hoss shay, when carriages were very roomy affairs.

When it came time to revise the statutes in 1868 the law crept in. The fine remained the same, twenty shillings, years after pounds, shillings and pence had ceased to be the measure in United States currency. And the twenty shilling fine is still in force to-day.

At first thought one might suppose that automobiles would be exempt under this ancient statute. Of course in 1682 no one dreamt of such a thing as a limousine. But even these twentieth century conveyances do not escape. Another section of that act prohibits the sale of axles shorter than four feet and ten inches. Fifty-six inches is the standard automobile gauge. Assemblyman Griffin has a bill aimed directly at this law too.

The law relating to English court decisions, enacted December 1, 1801, says:

"No adjudication, decree or opinion made, had or given in any court of law or equity in Great Britain, any cause depending, nor any printed report or statement thereof, nor any compilation, commentary, digest, lecture, treatise or other explanation or exposition of the common law, made, had, given, written or composed since the fourth day of July, in the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-six, in Great Britain or elsewhere, without the present boundaries of the United States of America, shall be received or read in any court of law, or elucidation, or explanation thereof, any practice, opinion or sentiment of the said courts of justice used, entertained or exposed to the contrary notwithstanding."

"About the only thing you can do in Jersey," said Assemblyman Griffin the other day, "is to swat the mosquitoes. I guess they didn't have the pests in the days when the patriarchs of Carteret's tribe ruled East Jersey with an iron hand. If they did have them I guess they attacked the witches and the people who played fives and sat in tippling houses on Sunday."